

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment may be seen either as a survival strategy for those who cannot find any other means of earning an income or as evidence of entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to be one's own boss. The self-employment rates shown here reflect these various motives.

Definition

Employment is generally measured through household labour force surveys. According to the ILO Guidelines, employed persons are defined as those aged 15 or over who report that they have worked in gainful employment for at least one hour in the previous week.

Self-employed persons include employers, own-account workers, members of producers' co-operatives, and unpaid family workers. People in the last of these groups do not have a formal contract to receive a fixed amount of income at regular intervals, but they share in the income generated

by the enterprise; unpaid family workers are particularly important in farming and retail trade. Note that all persons who work in corporate enterprises, including company directors, are considered to be employees.

The rates shown here are the percentages of the self-employed in total civilian employment i.e. total employment less military employees.

Comparability

All OECD countries use ILO Guidelines for measuring employment, although the operational definitions used in national labour force surveys may vary slightly across countries. Employment levels are also likely to be affected by changes in the survey design, questions sequencing and/or the ways in which surveys are conducted. Despite this, employment rates are likely to be fairly consistent over time.

Overview

In 2008, the share of self-employed workers in the total (men and women together) ranged from under 9% in Luxembourg, United States, the Russian Federation, Estonia, Norway, and Denmark to well over 30% in Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Greece, Turkey. In general, self-employment rates are highest in countries with low per capita income although Italy, with a self-employment rate of around 25.7%, is a striking exception. Ireland and Spain also combine high per capita incomes and high self-employment rates.

Close to 55% per cent of all self-employed workers are in the agricultural sector in Poland and Turkey, while this share amounts to 40% in Portugal, 30% in Greece, 24% in Mexico and 21% in Korea. The distribution of the self-employed among the categories of employers, own-account workers, members of producers' co-operatives, and unpaid family workers also varies considerably among countries. In particular, countries with relatively large numbers of small farms, such as Brazil, Mexico and Turkey, have relatively large numbers of unpaid family workers.

Over the period 1998-2008, self-employment rates have been falling in most countries although small increases were recorded in Germany, and larger ones in the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and the Russian Federation albeit from low levels. Conversely, there have been sharp declines in self-employment rates in Turkey, Greece, Korea, Brazil, Mexico and Spain, starting from a higher level.

Levels and changes in total self-employment rates conceal significant differences between men and women. In 2008, in half of the countries, over 17% of all men in employment were self-employed; the corresponding figure for women was under 9%. Also, self-employment rates for men rose by more than one percentage point in the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation, the Netherlands and Austria, while receding by more than one percentage point in close to two third of OECD countries, in particular in Turkey, Greece, Mexico, Brazil, Korea, Poland, Portugal and Spain. For women, self-employment grew significantly only in the Slovak Republic, the Russian Federation and the Czech Republic, while dropping by more than 10 percentage points in Turkey, Greece and Korea.

Sources

- OECD (2009), *Labour Force Statistics*, OECD, Paris.
- For Non-Member Countries: National Sources.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2000), "The Partial Renaissance of the Self-Employed", *OECD Employment Outlook*, Chapter 5, OECD, Paris, pp. 155-199.
- OECD (2005), *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook – 2005 Edition*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2009), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2004), *Quarterly Labour Force Statistics*, OECD, Paris.

Online databases

- *Employment Statistics*.

Web sites

- OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, www.oecd.org/els.
- OECD Entrepreneurship at Local Level, www.oecd.org/tds/leed/entrepreneurship.

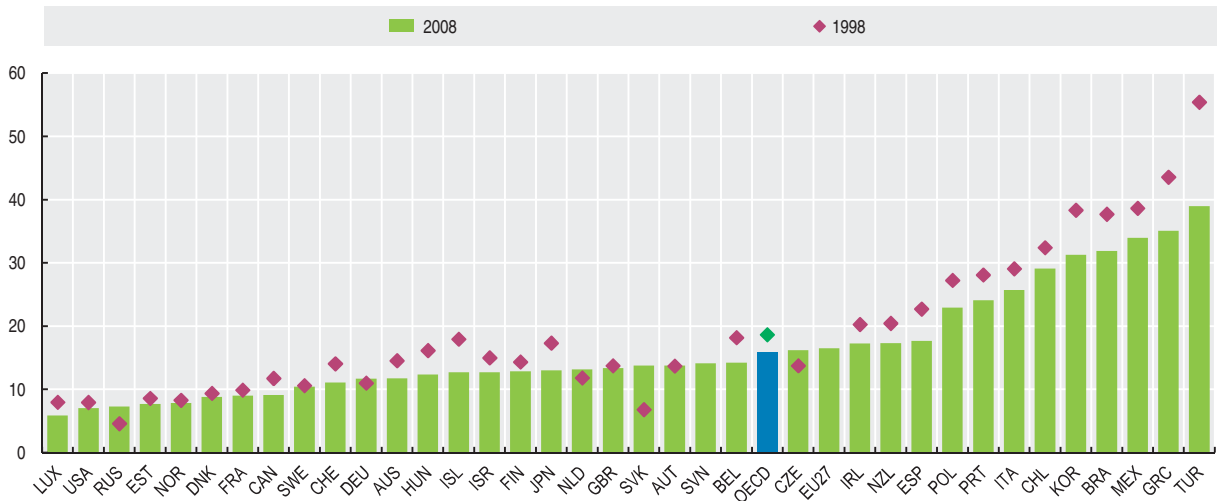


Self-employment rates
As a percentage of total employment by gender

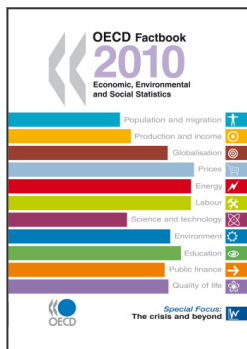
	Total				Men				Women			
	1990	2000	2005	2008	1990	2000	2005	2008	1990	2000	2005	2008
Australia	15.1	14.0	12.9	11.7	17.2	16.7	15.5	14.1	12.1	10.7	9.7	8.9
Austria	14.2	13.1	13.3	13.8	..	13.9	15.3	15.7	..	12.2	10.9	11.5
Belgium	18.1	15.8	15.2	14.2	18.5	17.5	17.5	17.0	17.5	13.5	12.3	10.8
Canada	9.5	10.6	9.4	9.1	10.8	11.7	10.5	10.2	7.8	9.2	8.1	7.8
Czech Republic	..	15.2	16.1	16.2	..	19.1	20.4	20.3	..	10.2	10.4	10.6
Denmark	11.7	8.7	8.7	8.8	..	11.7	11.6	12.1	..	5.5	5.3	5.1
Finland	15.6	13.7	12.7	12.8	19.5	17.8	16.7	16.8	11.3	9.2	8.5	8.6
France	13.2	9.3	9.1	9.0	14.9	11.5	11.5	11.6	10.9	6.7	6.3	6.2
Germany	..	11.0	12.4	11.7	..	13.4	14.9	14.1	..	7.9	9.4	8.9
Greece	47.7	42.0	36.4	35.1	47.5	43.7	39.1	37.8	48.0	38.9	32.0	30.9
Hungary	..	15.2	13.8	12.3	..	19.1	17.3	15.5	..	10.5	9.9	8.6
Iceland	..	18.0	14.2	12.7	..	24.0	20.1	17.1	..	11.0	7.4	7.4
Ireland	24.9	18.9	17.3	17.3	32.3	25.8	24.7	24.9	10.9	9.0	7.4	7.5
Italy	28.7	28.5	27.0	25.7	31.1	32.3	31.2	30.1	24.1	22.0	20.6	19.3
Japan	22.3	16.6	14.7	13.0	18.9	15.5	14.5	13.4	27.4	18.3	14.9	12.4
Korea	39.5	36.8	33.6	31.3	36.9	35.7	34.0	31.9	43.2	38.4	32.9	30.4
Luxembourg	9.1	7.4	6.5	5.9	9.1	7.7	7.4	6.8	9.1	6.9	5.3	4.7
Mexico	31.9	36.0	35.5	33.9	35.5	36.4	35.7	33.5	20.4	35.2	35.3	34.7
Netherlands	11.6	11.2	12.4	13.2	..	12.6	14.6	15.8	..	9.4	9.7	10.1
New Zealand	19.7	20.8	18.5	17.3	24.6	25.8	23.0	21.4	13.3	14.7	13.4	12.7
Norway	11.3	7.4	7.4	7.8	14.6	9.8	10.2	10.9	7.4	4.8	4.4	4.5
Poland	27.2	27.4	25.8	22.9	..	29.5	27.9	25.0	..	24.8	23.1	20.4
Portugal	29.4	26.1	25.1	24.1	..	27.5	26.7	25.6	..	24.4	23.3	22.4
Slovak Republic	..	8.0	12.6	13.8	..	10.8	17.2	18.4	..	4.6	6.9	7.8
Spain	25.8	20.2	18.2	17.7	25.8	22.2	20.8	20.9	25.9	16.6	14.5	13.3
Sweden	9.2	10.3	9.8	10.4	12.9	14.5	14.0	14.5	5.2	5.7	5.3	5.9
Switzerland	..	13.2	11.2	11.1	..	13.9	11.6	11.6	..	12.3	10.6	10.4
Turkey	61.0	51.4	45.8	39.0	53.5	46.5	42.2	36.1	78.4	64.7	56.2	46.8
United Kingdom	15.1	12.8	12.9	13.4	19.9	16.7	17.4	17.8	8.9	8.3	7.7	8.2
United States	8.8	7.4	7.5	7.0	10.5	8.6	8.8	8.3	6.7	6.1	5.9	5.6
EU27 total	..	18.3	17.3	16.5	..	20.9	20.5	19.7	..	14.8	13.2	12.5
OECD total	..	17.6	16.8	15.8	..	19.5	19.1	18.0	..	15.0	13.9	13.0
Brazil	38.2	36.5	34.9	31.9	37.9	38.4	36.3	33.4	38.6	33.8	33.2	30.0
Chile	..	32.2	31.2	29.1	..	33.3	32.3	29.2	..	29.6	29.0	28.9
Estonia	3.2	9.0	8.1	7.7	3.2	11.6	11.2	10.5	3.1	6.4	5.1	4.9
Israel	..	14.2	13.1	12.7	..	18.3	17.3	16.5	..	9.3	8.2	8.2
Russian Federation	..	10.1	7.8	7.3	..	10.5	8.3	7.9	..	9.7	7.3	6.7
Slovenia	..	15.8	15.1	14.1	..	18.5	17.2	16.5	..	12.7	12.6	11.3

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Self-employment rates: total
As a percentage of total employment



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